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[Shopping for Christmas presents]

A radio talk by Rowena Schmidt Carpenter, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered through WRC and 44 other associate NBC radio stations, in the National Farm and Home Hour December 10, 1931.

How do you do, Homemakers!

Like you and everybody else, I'm full of ideas about Christmas today. Of course that's natural on the tenth of December but I have a better reason than that. I took a little boy to see Santa Claus yesterday, to shake hands with a very jovial generous Santa in one of the stores here in Washington. And after Santa Claus had promised us we'd get everything we wished for Christmas we looked around to see what he had to offer. The small boy kept urging me to "See there?" and "See here?", pointing excitedly one way and another, which gave me a wonderful chance to look over the tremendous outlay of playthings. I saw many things very delightful for children, and many others not suitable at all for one reason or another. And, as you well know, price is not an indication of suitability. There are expensive toys that are fine, and inexpensive ones that are just as fine, and at all prices there are poor ones.

As I looked over this grand array I couldn't help thinking how much money would be wasted in these next two weeks, wasted by fond aunts and uncles, cousins, friends, and even parents choosing unwisely from the bewildering assortment. Let none of us be guilty of wasting money this year when so many people are in real need. And aside from the money, let's not waste the chance to select something that is just right for the child who is to get it.

That makes me think of a closet shelf I know about, -- a shelf that is full of toys given to a small boy a year or two years before he was ready for them. -- Some of the toys are too heavy, some too sharp, some too complicated to work, but all that have been saved will be good playthings bye and bye. Such mistakes aren't nearly so bad, of course, as the toys that will never be just right at any age, and it is perfectly possible for us grown-ups to be misled into buying that kind, too.

It's a shame to go astray in our selection when the stores are full of good toys, -- playthings that have a double purpose, because they delight, amuse, and entertain the child, at the same time they contribute something to his development. Now don't feel as one adult I know does that a toy ought to be for fun and for nothing else. That is just out of the question, because any plaything that is really fun to use for any length of time just can't help teaching something. That's not hard to believe when we remember that all of the child's early experiences are in play, and that we all come into the world knowing just nothing much at all. We have learned, you and I, (very long ago to be sure), that some things are hard, some soft; some are solid, some hollow; some break if they fall or are dropped while others bounce and still others make a loud clang. Some hollow things fit into each other because they are the same shape, and others of the same shape are not the right size to fit together.

All of these things and millions more you and I learned long before we were interested in ABC blocks, a doll house, an electric train, or a dump truck, and we learned them very largely from our playthings. Of course empty spools, boxes, discarded kitchen utensils, keys that unlock nothing, and lots of other things that are on hand in every home and so cost no cash afford a

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very young child lots of pleasure and learning experiences. But there are delightful toys, too, that teach him the feel, the look, the weight, and the color of things, and provide fascinating entertainment meanwhile. And for the older children there are other toys that are fun for make-believe games, for building and other creative play, and for every other type.

I can't describe in detail toys of each kind that will be suitable for every age, but your library will have good books or bulletins that will give you such information if you want it. Your own State University or extension service may have published pamphlets. Such organizations as the American Association of University Women and the American Child Health Association has printed material you will doubtless find in your library. I just hope that if you are still not through with your Christmas shopping for children, you will give special thought and if necessary special study to your choice. If you were listening in at this time a month ago you heard me make just the same sort of plea about selecting books for children. The illustrator and the publisher as well as the author make a great difference in the book, so know your EDITION before you buy. Some of the organizations that have written about playthings have also written about books.

What is true of shopping for children is true also of shopping for grown-ups. We all have friends who seem to have a knack for selecting presents, and we all know people who make the most hopeless choices. It takes time and thought to get just the right thing, but it doesn't necessarily take much money. Sometimes it is easy to think of the gift that is just right, -- something a friend has wished for or needed, and didn't dare get for herself. Try to make this the most satisfying Christmas your friends, your children, and the rest of your family have ever known because you make no mistakes in selecting their gifts.

I have no bulletin to offer you today but you may have a copy of this talk if you wish it. Write to your station or the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C., for the radio talk on Selecting the Right Christmas Gift.

Goodbye, Homemakers, until December 24th!